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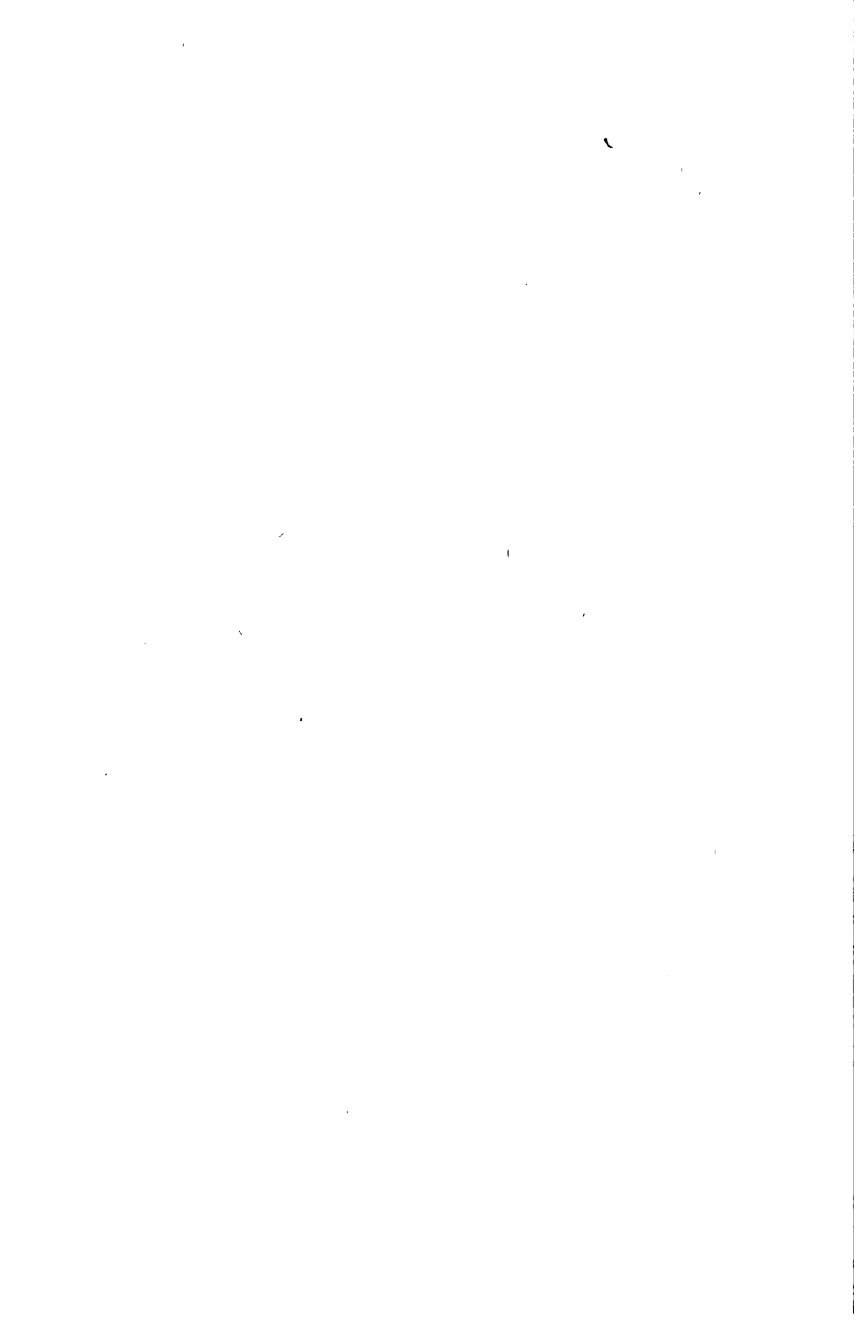
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IN THE PATHS OF THE WIND

By Glenn Ward Dresbach
THE ROAD TO EVERYWHERE

In the Paths of the Wind

By
GLENN WARD DRESBACH

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PREFATORY NOTE

Many of the poems included in this volume have appeared in *Poetry*, *The Bookman*, *Poet Lore*, *The Smart Set*, *The Midland*, *The New York Times*, *The Poetry Journal*, and *Panama Life*.

GLENN WARD DRESBACH

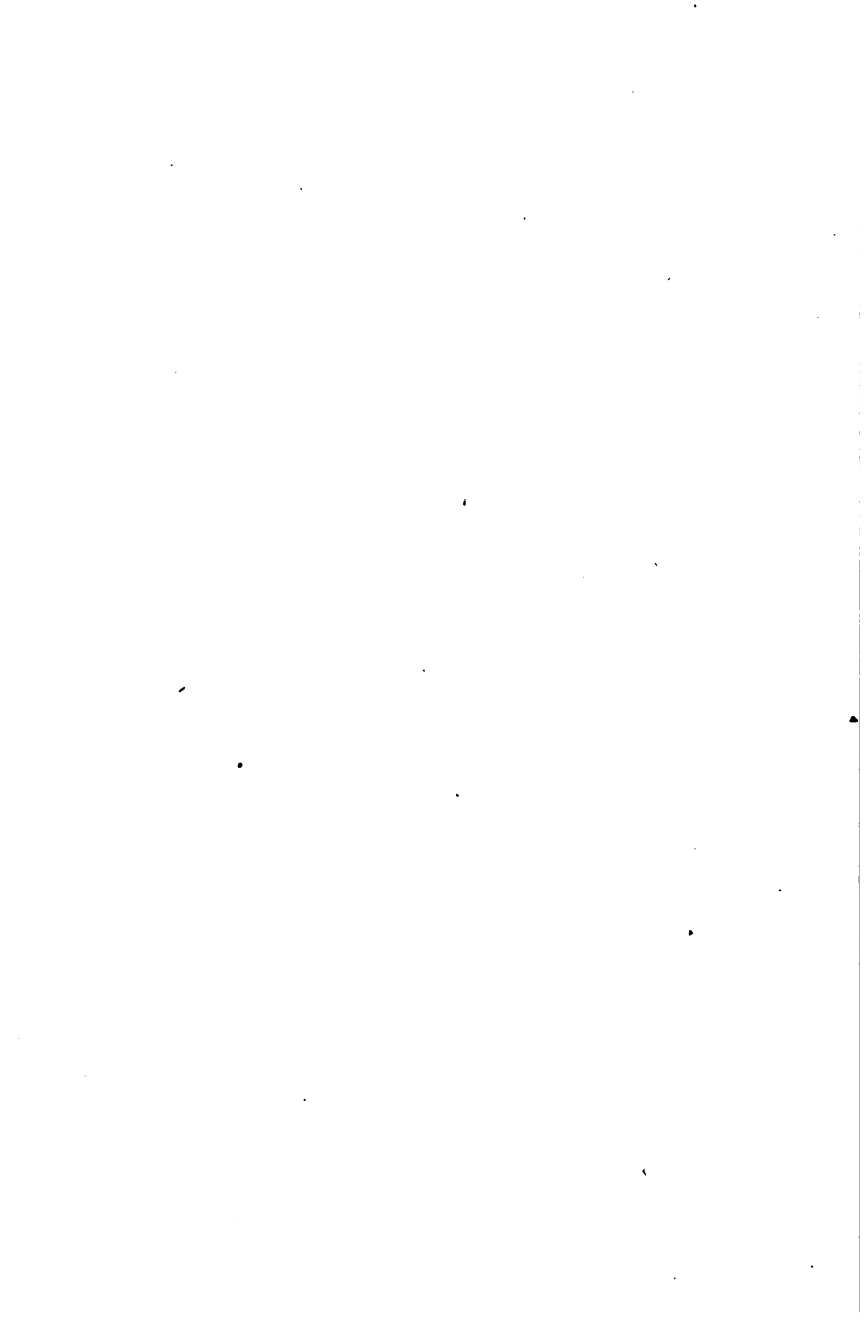
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IN THE PATHS OF THE WIND



THE SOWER WHO REAPED THE SEA

The road was dusty and the grass was gray
Along the roadside. In the harvest field
That I was passing heat-waves surged above
The fallen grain, and butterflies moved there
Like derelicts of Dreams. An old man stopped
His reaping and looked up with reddened eyes,
Dust from the grain had settled on his face
And sweat had washed innumerable paths
To nowhere. When he saw me watching him
A smile broke through the crust, and then he laughed,
"Go wash *your* face if you'd make fun o' mine!"

"How is the crop?" I asked.

He mopped the sweat
Upon his brow and answered, "None too good.
I sowed too late in season for the drouth."
"The same with me," I said.

"What did you sow?"
He asked me, looking at my city clothes.
"Some wild oats and a bag o' Dreams," I said,
And laughed a little harshly—for the dust.

He thought awhile and then his deep voice said,
"Well, we are better off than one I knew—
The sower who reaped the Sea, the bitter Sea!"

To What Appointed

"Who reaped the Sea?" I asked, in wonder, then.

"Who reaped the Sea," he said, "the bitter Sea!"

"I have not always lived here," he went on,
"In youth I left a place where dikes hold back
The sea from little valleys cool and green.
I lived in a small town, and worked with iron
Beside a man of iron. One day he hurled
His tools aside—and cursed the town and went
Out of the shop with hate for every one.

"Later I heard that he had bought a farm
That covered a small valley near the town.

"His valley was more favored than the rest
That first year, and while crops about us failed,
His ripened well and gave a golden yield.
And while the town went hungry he sent off
His harvest to another town that paid
A price a little higher. People went
To him and begged to buy some of his grain.
'Oh no!' he said; 'while I lived in your town
I had to pay the prices asked of me.
I'll sell where I do best. That settles it.'

"The next Spring found him sowing in his fields.
The warm days made his little valley green.
The Summer turned it into living gold.
And on the Summer evenings he would sit

And chuckle as the valley waved at him
A host of gleaming hands... Again the town
Was hungry and the people went to him
And begged to buy his grain. He laughed at them.
'Once I was hungry in your cursed town.
Who ever helped me?' he yelled out at them.
'A few days and I shall be reaping, fools,
As I have sowed. Who has a better right?'

"A great storm broke the dike the very night
Before he was to reap. We heard the sea
Rush with a purring madness as it came
Into the little valley near the town.
The morning after, all the storm had passed.
Most all the valley where he had his farm
Was under dark green water. Just a few
Tall heads of grain stuck up—and they were dead.
The water rocked them back and forth. Some folks
Went down to see the valley. And they found
The farmer, waist-deep, grasping at the grain.
He did not see the people. All who saw
Said he was weeping, and his bitter tears
Made little splashes on the bitter sea.

"A woman cried to him, from out the crowd,
'You have a mighty harvest on your hands.
You should be happy. You have reaped the Sea! "

SPRING IN THE BURRO MOUNTAINS

There is no sudden glory-growth of blooms
Here on the greening slopes, but rapture wakes
In many things. The Wind of Dawn that takes
From rainbow-distance subtle, sweet perfumes
Sings like an angel through the vast blue rooms
Of Heaven-Near-To-Earth. Each tree forsakes
Its listlessness and languor, and partakes
Of the fair feast of Sunlight. From the tombs
Of Dreams there comes a whispering stir of wings
Responding to the promise of the Sun,
And new dreams come to join the common days.
There is a glory for the heart that sings
Though of its many dreams it keeps but one
To greet new Springs down the immortal ways.

ONE FACE FROM THE CROWD

Where have I seen your face before?
Why does it seem so out of place
In a room with curtained windows
And a closed door?
Ah, lovely face
That a star has kissed and the sun,
That the wind has touched with loving fingers,
Still the wonder lingers, lovely one.

I remember. Summer came
With a heart of song and flame.
Boughs were swaying, winds were playing
Little lutes that knew your name
On a hillside where the grasses
Waved into the waves of sea
And the sea waved into skies...
Now it all comes back to me
As I look into your eyes
As I looked into them then.
Wonder goes to come again.

Long ago, long ago
On the hillside near the sea
What did we talk of?

Was it Love?
Or did we stand there silently?
So it seems to me
As I look at you today.
Wonder comes, words go away.

QUATRAIN

This much I know of Dreams that ache and sing
Seeking the glory of Life's vast estate:
I'd rather dream a great dream of a little thing
Than dream a little dream of something great.

O DREAMER OF DREAMS

O Dreamer of Dreams, have you heard men say,
 "The glory of dreams must fade away?"
Then I know that you smiled and I know that you said,
 "Not until Dreamers of Dreams are dead."

O Dreamer of Dreams, have you heard men sigh,
 "The Palace of Dreams must fall from on high?"
Then I know that you spoke, and said as you thrilled,
 "Not while a Dreamer of Dreams may build."

O Dreamer of Dreams, have you heard men say,
 "The fight is lost ere it starts today?"
Then I know that you shouted out in your might,
 "Not while a Dreamer of Dreams may fight."

O Dreamer of Dreams, have you heard men say,
 "Even Love turns from his own today?"
Then I know your heart sang while the winds sang
 above,
 "Not while a Dreamer of Dreams may love!"

ON THE ROAD WITH THE WIND

The wind went up the road
And the trees shook with laughter,
For the wind was filled with mirth
And the gladness of the Earth,
And I longed to follow after
Down the road and far away,
Far away and far away,
Till my heart could laugh and say,
"I have left behind the tangles
Of the threads the Fates have spun,
And I dance in golden spangles
Of the sun.

I have left behind my load
And my withered rose and lily.
All the ashes of old fires,
All the dust of dead desires
I have scattered willy-nilly.
Down the road and far away,
Far away and far away,
Rose and lily bloom today
But for me, and horns are blowing
Out of Elfland, and above
Larks keep singing that I'm going
To my Love."

NOCTURNE

Clouds, piled up like the dunes,
In a world that cried for rain,
Shifted by winds that shifted
The dunes themselves in the night,
Came from the night and drifted
Into the Night again.

Dreams, restless as the dunes
Where things that were remain—
Buried while the winds shifted
Or brought once more to sight—
Wandered from you and drifted
Back to you again.

WHEN I AM DEAD

When I am dead, O speak to me
No words that I have heard,
Lest to my peace come misery,
Lest my calm sleep be stirred
With want of mortal love again;
But bring a drop of April rain,
The dawn-song of a bird,
The leafy lyric of a tree,
A slender flower with its dew,
That I may dream—and seem to be
Dead to all but you!

SONG TO THE DAWN WIND

Rover of heights where rainbows find their being,
O wandering singer of the House of God,
Ever unseen and yet forever seeing,
Still near to heaven when you kiss the sod
With laughing lips, what do you know of striving
In narrow places dark with sordid things?
What do you know of pain, you that are thriving
On Beauty, sure forever of your wings?

O singer young forever, what of making
A palace of four narrow, cheerless walls?
You have a vasty mansion when is breaking
Splendor on heights and dancing water falls.
O singer glad forever, what of singing
After the songs were mute a lonely while,
Because there came a wondrous blessing winging
Into the heart out of a single smile?

But even you have debts to pay for living,
Spirit of Youth, that nothing may outlive.
You pass along the Earth each morning giving
Gifts to all things that in their turn must give.
What seeds you sow are sown beyond our knowing—

Concerned with our own ways while Morning
gleams—

But every Morn I feel that you are sowing,
If nothing else, the golden seed of Dreams.

Roamer of Roads where star-dust waits the Morning,
Though many hearts have longed to follow you,
To rest in Lotus Lands, forever scorning
The nearer beauties that they wander through,
I do not wish to follow you, and never
Come back to my own ways of sun and rain,
Of love and longing and of brave endeavor.
The World is yours—and I have my domain!

But take me with you for a rainbow hour
Beyond myself and all that minds may know,
Where meadows of the Morning are in flower,
And I shall not be sad if I may go
Back to my own place, to my own Dreams crying,
“Beauties you showed to me I saw again!”
O deathless Singer, from age to new Age flying,
One day may mark a life not lived in vain!

OF BATTLES

I.

O when the fighting spirit dies in one,
And when one cries for only peace and rest
And days where no wild Dreams are manifest,
Beware! The glow fades deadened in the Sun.
There is an urge no more where waters run
Shouting their challenge from the Earth's scarred
 breast,
No great adventure calling from the West!
When dies the Fighting Spirit, Dreams are done!

On to the battle, Youth. The battle pays.
War lasts forever in the growth of things,
The change of seasons, and the Winds of God.
War lasts forever in a heart that stays
True to a Dream that fights to keep its wings
Out of the dust where broken men must plod.

II.

Since one must die, why die before Death's hand
Shuts off the Sun and Moon and seals one's eyes
To smiles or tears, rainbows or stormy skies,
And all one hoped sometime to understand?

O living Death, O life in empty land,
When one's heart has no more a voice that cries
A challenge to the dullness and the lies
Of peaceful days, no voice of great command.

Give me a fighting chance for Victory
And I can better bear the great defeat
Than if I leave my Sword of Dreams to rust.
O Life be praised! I thrill that I can be
Here in the days whose bugle calls are sweet,
With Dreams to fight for, and to love, to trust!

TORNADO

I.

All through the early afternoon the airs
Were hot and heavy as if old despairs
Had burdened all their gladness. And each tree
Seemed stricken with a touch of mystery.
Weird, half-heard whispers came from leaf and grass.
Dull, listless clouds dragged onward in a mass
Over lack-lustre skies, and far away
The whelps of Thunder-lions rolled in play.

II.

The prairie stretched for miles about the place
Where Andrew stood. Strange shadows filled his face
As he looked on his house, the few tall trees,
The garden withered so that even bees
Could find no profit there, the yard that laid
Sun-parched and useless. For no children played
There through the time that he had toiled to make
It hold some beauty even for the sake
Of olden dreams. . . Often his wife would say,
"Such work will never make this old farm pay."

Now as he gazed, his wife came to the door.
She stood there plain as the plain dress she wore,

A woman tall and heavy-boned, with eyes
Lacking in something like the heavy skies
They gazed upon. The dull light on her face
Was like the light upon a desert place.
"It's going to storm," she called. "Go drive the cow
Into the barn. Don't you be standing now
Like all you have to do is look around
For flowers that will not bloom on this ground."

Andrew stared at her and his sunken cheek
Grew red beneath its tan, for being meek
Could never please him. Still, he hated strife
And tried to turn his anger from his wife
Against the land that had so often lied
To him through days when all his crops had dried
In the hot winds, leaving him always poor
While the new seasons offered some new lure.
And while his wife stood there with wrinkled brow
He turned in silence to drive in the cow
From the dry pasture and the promised rain,
And as he went he lived his life again.

III.

From boyhood Life to him had always seemed
A muddled thing, although sometimes he dreamed
Of great endeavor, but the dream soon passed.
Each new Dream came less strenuous than the last.
And poverty was nothing new, and so
He went a careless way, seeming to grow

Like city plants set high above the street
At someone's window, half-drooped in the heat.
Each task he tried was worse than one before,
Not worth his while, not worth the ache in store.
And so he came to hunger for the fields
In places where he heard of golden yields,
For brooks and trees and rain scented with bloom
And for the sunlight and the peaceful gloom.
He was a dreamer with no tools to build
The lofty castle that vain vision willed,
And so he seemed to fail, though meaning well,
For reasons that his fellows could not tell...
Then one clear day in Spring, sick of his load
Of emptiness, he followed a long road
Out to the farms where it was time to sow.
Five years! And now it seemed an Age ago!

VI.

Five years ago he came along the lane,
That stretched before him now, after a rain
Had made the scrubby willows sweet and new.
And he remembered how Life thrilled him through
With a new gladness, as if from the Spring
He gained the something that had made birds sing
Along his way. And new hope stirred in him
Till all the muddled past seemed growing dim
In distance whence he came praying to find
More strength of body and more peace of mind
Than toil within a smoke-hung city gave.
And as he neared the house his heart grew brave.

Five years ago! . . . Old Wynne came to the door
And greeted him and offered him a chore
For food and lodging for the night. Next day
He had arranged with the old man to stay
To help upon the farm. And Summer passed
And crops were in before he knew how fast
Affection bound him to the quiet place
And to the old man's daughter in whose face
He seemed to read a promise and a lure.
So he remained although his pay was poor.

v.

The next Spring old Wynne let him take the lead
At tending crops, and Andrew, taking heed
Of Kate, the farmer's daughter, worked his best,
And was as good a farmer as the rest
Who tilled the soil for miles on either side.
Then one night after harvest old Wynne died,
And Kate was left alone and, when her woe
Had passed its storm, Andrew begged her to go
With him to town and there become his wife.
And she clung to him and a strange new life
Seemed waking in him as he stroked her hair,
And looked into her eyes and found them fair,
And kissed her lips and found them like a fire
Waking the half-cold ashes of Desire.

When they were married they began to do
Old tasks upon the farm, but all seemed new.
The winds were softer there, even the trees

Had learned new whispered sounds, and mysteries
Of sun and moon came over them until
Their narrow world seemed to awake and fill
With unguessed wonders. So they planned to make
The farm pay double for each other's sake,
To grow quite well-to-do and, later blessed
By all good comforts, settle down and rest
In some small town near by, as farmers do
When they grow old and worldly goods accrue.

VI.

The drought came then. Two years they struggled
through,
Two hopeful, anxious years with work to do,
And then another year that seemed to be
Filled full of doubt and strife and misery.
And so time passed and they were always poor,
Struggling, and almost hating, while the lure
Of the new seasons led them. So they lost
Their faith and understanding, and the cost
Was bitterness that rose between them so
It grew like weeds where Love had ceased to grow.

VII.

When Andrew drove the cow along the lane
He tried to whistle while great drops of rain
Made little clouds of dust on the dry field.
Then suddenly the trees and grasses reeled
• In a wild wind that seemed to rend the sky.

Out in the west dark banks of clouds loomed high,
Then toppled over and began to roll,
Maddened, through space, held in the storm's control.

Even the cow that Andrew drove became
Aware of danger and, though old and lame,
The last of the good herd he sold to pay
For ravages when drought had held its sway,
She tossed her head, and, bellowing, rushed to gain
An over-hanging bank that turned the rain.

"Well, go then, you old devil," Andrew said,
And running to the house he bowed his head
Against the storm. Then through the rain he heard
His wife call sharply, and with vision blurred
By wind and rain, he saw her at the gate
And heard her cry, "Andrew, run back. Don't wait
For me. Tornado coming! There's a place
Down by the creek." Her hair half-veiled her face
As she came running. Andrew seized her arm,
Filled with concern, and partly with alarm,
And then they ran together, scrambled under
The over-hanging bank, and over thunder
They heard the solid roar of the storm.
Near by the cow lolled quite as calm and warm
As any cow should be, munching her cud.
And Andrew and his wife laughed in the mud
Close to the damp clay of the bank, nor knew
The reason why the laugh rang loud and true.

Then they looked out above the bank and saw
A sight of mingled horror and of awe.
A hell-soot cloud shaped funnel-like drew near
Trailing upon the ground, and they could hear
The crash of trees as it came near the house.
Then as a lion could toss aside a mouse
The great cloud hurled their house in wreckage high,
Splintered the barn, and then went tearing by
Upon the prairie, leaving in its wake
Ruin and desolation. . . Some hearts break
Seeing the work of years so hurled aside
To nothingness, while Life's needs still abide.

VIII.

Andrew said to his wife, "Well, it is past.
This is our greatest, may it be our last
Affliction on this cursed ground," and tears
Burned in his eyes. He thought of troubled years
Strained through for nothing, and he bowed his head.
His wife reached out her arms. No word was said.
He felt her hot lips on his cheek. He filled
With a great wonder, as if God had willed
New gladness wake in him instead of pain.
And so they stood forgetting wind and rain.

He heard his wife say, "While you're safe I care
But little for the house." It seemed the air
Became a rare wine, singing at each breath,
And what had been so near despair and death

Was now a new life stirring wild and strong
Within his being, in a place of song.
His wife had said few words of love the while
They worked and doubted. Seldom came a smile
That he could claim his own. But could he know
Her heart grew numb to see him suffer so
Upon the farm, and that he did not give
The little kindness that makes kindness live?

IX

And when he kissed her and looked on her face
It was no longer like a desert place.
Flowers awoke, and sweetness lingered there
The while he touched with tender hands her hair
Blown by the storm. He seemed, at last, to see
Beauty is mostly what one makes it be.

And while they stood bound close by Love again
The wind ceased and the rushing troops of rain
Left them behind. Dusk had begun to fall
And the world seemed all intimate and small.

Then Andrew said, "Tomorrow we will build
A shack up there and have it amply filled
With Love and sunlight. Maybe Life will be
Much better now if you care but for me
And I care but for you—instead of gain
From crops that dry up for the lack of rain."

Said Kate, "We are not paupers even now.
The storm forgot to take along our cow."

And Andrew said, "It takes tornado weather
To wreck a house—and bring two hearts together."

So arm-in-arm they went along the lane
Back to the wreckage scattered on the plain.
While Love, who cares for neither wealth nor place,
Led them afar into a starry space.

WHEN MY ROBE OF DREAMS IS TATTERED

When my robe of Dreams is tattered,
If ever it is so,
And some one seems to scorn it,
O I would have him know
That it was torn on points of stars
And gold of the rainbow.

MORN-LOVE

When youthful Dawn Wind wakens
In mountains of the morning,
The Willow in the valley
Stirs, and begins adorning
Herself to meet her lover,
While perfumes cling and thicken,
And all earth-pulses quicken
In meadows of the clover.

She spreads her silver tresses,
Her cool arms softly gleaming.
She looks into the brooklet
And smiles for all her dreaming.
Thrilling with song and laughter
She waits the Dawn Wind's coming;
Her fresh young lips keep humming
Of joy the World gropes after.

And when the Dawn Wind dances
Across the clover to her,
The madness and the gladness
Of morn-love dances through her.

Her soft arms clasp her lover,
Her lips to his keep clinging
While the heart of morn is singing
In the meadows of the clover.

O woe and wonder of it!
The Willow loves him only,
And when he leaves her, singing,
Though she is still and lonely,
She knows he is her lover—
And so her love discloses
No envy of wild roses
In meadows of the clover.

FAUN SONG

The grasses billow in the wind
Fragrance-laden,
The maiden Willow sighs to see
The Moon-Maiden.
Lovely things of Earth and Heaven
Meet and greet and stars are seven.
Come with dancing feet!

MUSIC

Oh! I have heard you in vast silences
Of mountains and of deserts; I have heard
You in the forest where no leaf was stirred,
And I have found you in white distances
Of moonlight on the sea where wonder is
Too well expressed for sounded note or word,
And I have known you when an unseen bird
Shook song and dew drops from a dream of his.

But never did I know all of your sweetness
Until her voice came to me in the night
Of swarming stars and pagan winds. O then
You spoke with new expression and completeness
For me alone. And when Death snuffs the Light
I shall not wake till speaks her voice again.

AT A FACTORY DOOR

I wish I could be a piper
With power to lead away
The children, toiling and dreaming
When they should dream and play,
To a place where grasses sway
And a mountain stream is gleaming
Under the skies that are gleaming
With the scattered gold of Day.

I wish I could be a piper
With power to let them see
The green boughs that are swaying
On hills where winds are free.
Where the music of a tree
Seems made for children playing,
For glad-eyed children playing
On the Road to Arcady.

And I am but a dreamer
Who can give but a song
To the children toiling and waiting
For God to right the wrong.
O may the song ring strong

Over sounds of wheels they are hating,
Where hearts are aching and hating,
And bear their dreams along

To places sweet with silence
And the hush of growing things,
Where the clearest streams are flowing
And the lark is glad for wings,
To places where Earth sings
A song for the Spirit growing,
For the Spirit groping and growing
Till its great challenge rings.

THE ROOM OF THE MOONLIGHT

I call this the Room of the Moonlight,
For only the moonlight came
To me in the night and silence
When dreams called out your name.

O the moonlight came and lingered
Hopeful, it seemed, and kind—
Then lonely and pale it wandered
Back to the arms of the wind.

And often I watched the moonlight
Along the still bed creep,
White flame over white of your pillow—
And it would not let me sleep.

I call this the Room of the Moonlight,
For I saw in this very place
A dream come true in its beauty—
When the moonlight found your face!

Glory creeping to glory,
I saw the moonlight creep
To you, in a night of magic
Too powerful for sleep!

OCEAN

O once almighty vast of Mystery,
O restless Power of wide glooms and gleams,
Still burns a wonder that Man made you be
A bearer of his Dreams!

Once over you only the winds had passed
And nameless monsters stirred your silent deeps.
Now all your ways are marked with ships. At last
Beneath your breast there creeps

The steel that seems to live, as silently
As monsters crept into a hidden lair.
All that you are is known. And Man would see
The unreachd heights of Air!

And yet you are as powerful as when
Man trembled on your shores. The endless moan
Of you went trembling through him. Ah, but then,
You were a vast Unknown!

And though you rose in anger, and white foam
Leaped from bared teeth on reefs where ships were
hurled,

Man came again, a wanderer from home,
Until he claimed the World.

O Beautiful, yet cruel in beauty, now
Man sees your beauty, blind with fear no more.
Lifter of hearts by one touch on the brow,
Why break them as before?

Yet nothing you may ever say or do
Can drive Man from you till the greedy sky
Has sucked you up—and days all wild and new
Mark vasts grotesque and dry.

For Man has made a playground and a mart
Upon you, and his battlefields are spread
Across you and deep down into your heart,
Restless, uncomforted!

O waves that wash the white feet of the Moon
When first she rises from her place of rest,
Reach out with a soft touch and soon, O soon,
Join hands of East and West,

Join hands of North and South not but in trade
But in a Brotherhood like no men knew
When their great war on the Unknown was made...
With Dreams they conquered you!

With Dreams they conquered you! And can it be
The Dreams have failed their ancient, changeless
trust,
To fall, at last, upon new Mystery
And new Unknowns of Dust?

THE HOUSE IN THE WILLOWS

I.

The sudden twilight put dark shadow-cloaks
Upon the trees dripping with recent rain.
The Summer night came like a weary woman
In mourning, with a breath of sighs, into
The southern valley where I lost my way.
And, feeling the great loneliness man feels
At such a time, I went on stubbornly,
Just to keep going, and I came at last
Upon a group of willows and a house
With no light in its windows. Shadows clung
About the place, and there was not a sound
But whispers of the willows and the stir
Of sluggish waters somewhere in the gloom.
I mounted creaky stairs and stood awhile
Upon the porch. A bat swerved dizzily
From out of the shadows. Not another sign
Of life I saw about the place. I tried
The door. It opened slowly, with complaint
Of rusted hinges, on a narrow hall.
I called into the gloom of it and heard
My voice grow into something strange and loud;
And half afraid, I laughed at my own fears,

And heard my laugh go crazy as a bat
Into the darkness of the musty hall.
I struck a match and entered. To my right
A door, half open, led into a room
With dusty floor and heavy earthy smells.
Two half-burned candles stood in tarnished sticks
Upon a table and I lighted them
And looked about the room. A fireplace
With scattered ashes, and a narrow couch
Beside a window with the curtains drawn
Was all I saw at first. I turned about
And struck against a wicker rocking chair
That stood beside the table. I sat down
In it for lack of something else to do.
Idly I looked about the cheerless walls.
And whispers of the willows came to me
And stir of sluggish waters in the gloom.

II.

I must have slept, for I remember now
I woke from troubled dreams and heard a sound
As if a curtain rustled at the window.
And then I saw a woman somewhat old,
Either in years or age that sorrow gives,
Sitting upon the couch. Her dark eyes gazed
Into the fireplace. Her slender hands
Were clasped so tightly that the fingers looked
Like ivory on the black dress she wore.
She was not beautiful, but as I stared

I saw such charm as only years can give
When all the dross of Dreams is burned away
And some great Dream or Love remains to touch
The features to new power and new life.

"Madam," I said, "forgive me. I intrude
Upon your revery. I did not know
You were about the place, so still it was
When I came in."

She turned her eyes to me,
Then in a voice toned with the willows said,
"I'm only sorry that the house affords
So little comfort for a weary guest.
If you will listen I shall tell you why."

My heart was like an instrument that knew
Only the single sad note of her voice.

"It was a southern springtime," she went on,
"When mocking birds were singing and their songs
Were everywhere, that he came down the road
To father's house. The sun was on his hair
And he had nothing but his violin
And Youth and Dreams. I loved him then with love
That could not run or hide—and so I did.

"My father met him at the door. They talked—
And one voice reached me like a lovely song.
Then there was silence. Father said to me,

When I went back into the room again,
'That fellow wanted some place he could spend
A month or two. I sent him up the road
To find a place. I can't be bothered here
With him and all his airs and lengthy hair.'
My mother laughed—and I was very still.

"The next day I went to a neighbor's house
Upon an errand. Near the house I heard
His violin singing of unborn Springs.
We met beneath the trees. The mocking birds
All seemed to know that Love was there . . . And so
Spring passed in glory and we often met
In secret places sweet with growing things.
We loved each other dearly. Father learned
About it and forbade us our great joy.

"In brief, we ran away and, in a city
Not very far from here, were married. Then
My husband looked for work and found it soon—
And we were very happy . . . Afterwhile
He started work, at nights, upon a song
That haunted him. Often he worked all night.

"Before it was completed I grew ill
And doctors said it was my lungs. They said
I must live in the country for a time.
We had no money, so my husband worked
Like mad upon his song and finished it.

He kissed me, I remember, and went out
To sell the song. That night when he came home
I heard him singing. He came in the room
And showed a roll of bills to me. He said
A publisher had bought the song at once.

"Not until long months after did I learn
That he had borrowed money from a friend,
And brought me part of it, and with a part
Had taken life insurance, fearing that
If he should die no one would care for me.

"Later we left the city and came here
And rented this small house. My husband said
That he would care for me while I was ill
And work upon a new song. I grew worse.
And he kept growing thinner all the time.
I wrote to mother. Father answered me.
He said, in part, I was no child of his,
And that I might have married well. He blamed
My husband for his poverty and called
Him coward, thief and other cruel names.
My husband saw the letter. His dark eyes
Filled slowly with great tears. He sat and looked
Out of the window. Willows all about
Were sighing. After that he seemed to be
More troubled . . . Since I was so very weak
His music made me nervous, so he went
Down by the stream to work upon his song.

Late in the night, when gray mists hovered near,
I heard the faint, sweet sorrow whispering,
Like willows, from his violin. One night
He came into this room and wrote the notes
On paper not as white as his poor face.

"Next day he seemed more cheerful, and he took
His song to the small village down the road
And sent it to a publisher. He brought
A doctor back with him, and told me now
I could have better care—since he would have
Money for all our needs . . . The song came back
With nothing but a little printed note.
He stared at it a long time; then he hurled
It where these ashes are and looked at me
With awful eyes. After a time he spoke.
He told me of his debts, that all the money
He borrowed had been spent. And he cried out,
'I am a coward, as your father said,
Or I would do more for you.' Then he came
And bowed beside me on this couch and wept.
'If I were dead you'd be well-off,' he moaned.

"I could not comfort him. I was too deep
In my own pit of sorrow and despair.
I thought that all the world was wrong. My faith
In him was broken for the time. He seemed
To have failed me. When I looked up at last
He was not there. A little later came

An old nurse from the village, and she said
My husband sent her, saying he would be
Away from home awhile. Towards evening
A neighbor rushed into the house. He said
My husband had been bitten by a snake
Sometime that afternoon and had been found
Dead by the stream among the willows . . . Now
I well remember that he told me of
The water moccasins that crept about
Among the grasses by the sluggish stream.
And how he hated them! He used to say
The sight of one sent shivers up his spine.

"When I had heard that he was dead I swooned
And knew no one for days. They buried him
Down in the village churchyard. while I tossed
In fever, crying out in misery.

"When I was stronger the old nurse told me
The snake had bitten him upon the wrist
And that they found him, with his violin
Clasped to his breast, stretched out beside the stream
Under the willows. . . All too well I knew
How he had died. And with an irony
Of Fate my strength came back until at last
I could walk down beside the stream where he
Had died for me, and hear the willows sing
The lost song of his silent violin.

"I did not want for care. His death had sent
His life insurance to my aid when he
Thought there was nothing else to do but die.
O God . . . O God! . . ."

III.

Her voice seemed suddenly
To be a part of whispers that I heard
From willows all about. I started up
With strange fear over me. And she was gone.
The candles, burned down to their sockets, cast
A sickly light about the room. I called.
My own voice frightened me. It crept away
Into the musty hall and lost itself
Among the whispers of the willows there.
I rushed out of the room—and after me
Came whispers of the willows, till at last
I found a road and, down the road, a house.
Dawn was just blooming and I heard near by
A mocking bird that sang as if the world
Had known no sorrow. At the house I stopped.
An old man was already at the well
Drawing some water. I went up to him.

"Who lives," I asked, "in that house, up the road,
With all the willows 'round it?"

Not a word

He answered me. He stood and blinked at me.
And then he muttered, as if to himself,
“No one has lived there since they found her dead
Of snake bite where the willows meet the stream.”

A NEW MEXICO HILL-SONG

Out where only the high hills wall us
In the lap of a world that is full of sun,
Out where the hill-winds dance and call us
On for adventurings just begun,
We feel the thrill that Spring is waking
And every path is worth the taking,
Far from the world where hearts are breaking
In the race that is never won.

Out here joy comes for the asking
And every tree is a friend today,
And the lazy rabbit dreaming and basking
Only from habit runs away.
And hand in hand we follow the turning
Of any path, and the wild hills' learning
Makes us wise and sets us yearning
With open skies to stay.

Out here dreams are worth the dreaming,
Where every wind has a dream to sing,
And just ahead is a glory gleaming,
Behind, some sweet remembered thing.
And I feel that all the brooding sorrow
Of hearts would pass if they came tomorrow
And followed our trails and dared to borrow
Gold from the stores of Spring.

A MOUNTAIN NOCTURNE

Folded are wings of the winds;
No wandering cloud-ship mars
With motion a sky that sleeps
In the singing silence of stars.

Folded are wings of my dreams
And closed are the gates of unrest—
And I would not stir in the night
From your lips and the spell of your breast.

As still as the mountains are
We sit in a world that is young—
But more than words have we said
And more than songs have we sung!

DIRGE

Oh! take your flowers from his grave,
You custom-guided people.
And still the bells that now disturb
The owls in the steeple.

He would not have the flowers die
As he has died for you,
Torn in his bloom from a place in the sun...
There is nothing you can do!

A GIPSY SONG IN THE CITY

You have turned my feet from the open road
And the hills where the winds are calling.
Would you hold me here in the youth of the Year
When the apple blooms are falling
Pink and white by the Bluebird's nest,
When rainbows come from the heart of the West?
When the grasses stir and the maiden Willow
Suns her hair, and the young Earth's breast
Is as soft and sweet as any pillow
Where Israfel's head may rest?

You have turned my feet from the open road
But back again they are turning,
And with laugh and shout my heart goes out
To the places of its yearning.
It scatters the dew by the pasture bars
And it laughs where the violets cover the scars
On the brow of the hill, and where nooks are shady
It dances with fauns, and nothing mars
Its crystal dreams of a lovely lady
Who shall come to my tent of Stars!

SONG

Sometimes your love's a Rainbow
Arching my world for me,
Sometimes your love's a white ship
Coming in from sea.

The Rainbow goes, the white ship
Turns again to sea!
And then your love's an angel
That brings them back to me.

A FATHER AND HIS DEAD SON

O little, white, still son
Lying upon your little, white, still bed,
Never to laugh and run
Among the wind-blown flowers blue and red
Nor chase the butterflies
With gold and purple wings,
Nor want the rainbow in the skies,
Have you found lovelier things?

What dreams I dreamed of you!
I saw you go down the white road of Years—
Now even dreams can do
Nothing but trace the empty miles with tears.
You will not look at me,
Yet on your face there gleams
A sweet, faint smile. Oh! can it be
You have found dearer dreams?

O little, white, still son,
The beautiful home that I had planned for you!
The windows, every one
Looking on something wonderful to view,

Till you at last could see
All things beneath the dome
Of vast blue sky. Oh! can it be
You have found a happier home?

O little, white, still son,
The deep, grave, hopeful love you woke in me!
I dreamed somewhere was one,
Born lovely for you, who would come to be
Your mate some blossomy spring,
While star-blooms spread above.
Oh! do you need no earthly thing
Having found a vaster Love?

LIKE THE WIND IN THE DUNES

The wind came into the dunes
And shifted the weary sand—
As if it sought old patterns
Of a loved, remembered land.

A mood, like the wind, found my heart
And shifted the dreams it knew
As if to find lost glories
And beauties that were you!

ON THE ROAD WITH THE MORNING

Heigh-ho! The winds blow
Down the Road that gleams
As if bands of fairies scattered
All their packs of Dreams
In their flight when Dawn's first light
Danced on singing water.
And I go, with dream-robe tattered,
With a shield the years have battered,
Where has passed the laughing daughter
Of the fairy king—
And for joy I sing:

"Heigh-ho! The winds blow
Alike for man and fairy—
As if nothing really mattered
But that hearts be airy!
Sunbeams pass across the grass
And in the boughs above me.
Lo! They mend with gold my tattered
Robe of Dreams, and gems are scattered
At my feet. The Road must love me
That it squanders so
Treasures where I go!"

THE CITY IN THE DESERT

He, whom Life drove from the City,
In the desert came to die,
And Death, though not in pity,
Reared a city in the sky
For him to see in silence
Before all light passed by.

He saw great hazy towers
All of dull lights and hues,
Like stuff of withered flowers,
Pale purples and thinned blues,
All casting ghostly shadows
On endless avenues.

He saw the hazy towers
Where no one human came
To use their puny powers
For nobleness or shame.
He saw a magic city
Where none could bless or blame.

He saw ethereal places
Back from the endless street,
[63]

But neither forms nor faces
Seemed anywhere to meet—
Only the dizzy wavelets
Surged outward from the heat.

He saw frail, giddy spires
Lift in the rocking sky,
Touched with weird lights and fires
Forever passing by,
And wharves all still and empty
Where long pale sands were dry.

He saw no stir of gladness
Down the endless avenues,
No sign of strife or sadness
Stirred those unearthly hues.
And over all the city
Pale purples and thinned blues!

There in the desert lonely
Over the shifting sands,
He cried, "I can see only
A city that empty stands—
Empty as hearts when broken,
Empty as empty hands!"

"Empty of all I wanted,
Towers and avenues,
Empty the houses haunted
With all infernal hues—

A hell where demons painted
Pale purples and thinned blues!"

And Death, though not in pity,
Closed his half-maddened eyes,
Wiped out the swaying city,
The dizzy desert skies—
And who knows but thereafter
He looked on Paradise!

PURPLE

Purple grapes hung in the purpling gloom.
Frail purple flowers swayed in the musky grass.
I caught a breath of passionate perfume,
And saw you pass
(A shadow in motion, a drifting purple hue)
And I reached out my arms and called to you—
Only to lose you in purpling shadows that between us
came.
Nothing I heard but the autumn winds whispering
your name.
Maddened I rushed to find you, to hold you in my
caress,
But my open arms closed only on purple emptiness.
I called... No answer came.
Nothing I heard but the autumn winds whispering
your name.

INTERLUDE

Upon the wall of shimmer-sky
Climb roses of the Dawn,
And clouds, like gorgeous birds go by,
Forever on and on
Unto the cryptic vales and steeps
Where no one sows and no one reaps.

If I could climb that lofty wall
(So raptured dawn-winds tell)
Oh! I would hear, o'er whispers all,
The harp of Israfel
With notes like rose leaves falling through
A space of star-dust and of dew.

But, Love, could I not bear to you
One little dawn-rose fair,
One note that Israfel sent through
The gardens of the air,
I would not wish to climb the skies
Beyond your smile, beyond your eyes.

BEYOND HIS MEANS

The short trial ended and the verdict came.
Then voices droned and then a silence fell
As Gordon Courtland bowed beneath his shame
Was led back to his cell.
An old man near me said, "This is like hell
For his poor parents. Man, he left his teens
Only a few years back. He started well—
Then lived beyond his means . . ."

And I could not forget young Courtland's face,
The high, white brow, dark eyes and the pale cheek,
The full lips that could smile in ready grace,
The chin so nearly weak.
It was the face of one who went to seek
Life's gold and was won by the gleam of dross,
A face not beautiful for being meek,
Nor scarred beneath a Cross!

So, one year out of college, Courtland fell
For his wild dreams into the pit of things
To have his heart seared in the heat of hell.
Again the poor moth's wings
Have touched the flame, again a cruel Fate sings
Over a broken thread—and so it goes!

There is a price to pay that sometimes brings
To us another's woes!

Who is to blame? Let us go where he went
Through these young years and see what we may see.
This was his Home, and here the twig was bent—
And now the twig's a tree!
The stained glass windows! How they stare at me!
Here at the very start we find a clue—
The light of heaven struck them but to be
Colored as it passed through!...

This is the School where first his feet were set
Upon the new roads. How did it fail him then?
In leading out the mind does it forget
The heart in little men?
Somehow, it seems if he were here again
Some one could find a surer way to teach
What is worth while to guide the judgment when
Some things are out of reach.

This is the Church his parents forced on him
Before he thought of God in his own way...
Did he hear any prayer or mighty hymn
That made *him* want to pray?
Even here Pride and Jealousy held sway,
And costly raiment came here from the marts.
He saw fair women in a vain display
Hide something in their hearts...

This is the College where men are wise.
Has *it*, too, failed him? Or was he to blame?
Does not it not offer too much to the eyes
And carp too much to Name?
And does it bow too low to empty fame
And prate of Vision and love Money more?
However it may be, his is the shame!
Here all is as before! . . .

This is the Bank. He learned of finance here.
The crooked deals he saw! The little schemes!
Can it be that his vision was not clear?
That these crept into Dreams?
And yet the Bank is upright, so it seems,
For it has nobly sent him to a cell.
How will the balance be when fire gleams
On old accounts in hell?

This is the City. Here he went the pace
The people set for him, and laughed his way
Through wealth and lust to many a pretty face
In home and cabaret.
Is it all his, this debt he has to pay?
As went the evidence it seems to be!
Or might it be nearer correct to lay
It to Society?

O throng that dances on the shifting sands,
Do you not see that some one falls each day

Spent and alone, with empty, groping hands?
Have *you* no price to pay?
What of each drop of blood that slips away
A Nation's strength when these you trample bleed?
The years are long—and *this* is but a day!
O mirth-mad hosts, take heed!

SHADOWS

In the large room was gaiety and light
And laughter louder than a song should be.
I watched the well-dressed people making free
With Life, and then I passed into the night.
The curtained windows of the room had might
To hold my eyes. And there in front of me
Came shadows and passed shadows, ceaselessly
Acting a tableau that burned in my sight.

I thought of the gay room, the near-content,
The sharpened laughter, and the lure of eyes,
The joy of pride, the efforts made to please.
The windows held me. Shadows came and went
Upon the curtains while the brooding skies
Sent down a wind that chuckled in the trees.

TO JULIA

Aged Seven

What wonderland have you been through?

You, with your heart so full of dreams.
Its magic lingers over you.

I hear the laughter of its streams
Within your laughter, and its skies
Leave dawn and moon-rise in your eyes.

What Palaces have you in Spain?

Princess of childhood's golden hours!
I know the rainbow o'er the plain
Reflects the glory of their towers.
And oh, my worldly heart bows down
To kiss the hem of your white gown.

And may the years not take from you

Your Wonderland, and may the rain
Of coming years let rainbows through
Upon your Palaces in Spain.

And may God smite with sword that gleams
The one that dares to rob your dreams!

And may my worldly heart bow down
To kiss the hem of your white gown!

SONG

The Moon was silver over the silver willow
In the garden by the sea,
And each fairy had a rosebud for a pillow
Up in the red rose tree,
And each had a lute with silver strings
That held the wonder and lure of things.
And the Wind took up the tune,
Till the Child cried out to his Mother,
"O Mother, I want the Moon,
The Moon, the Moon, the Moon!"
But I heard the voice of the Mother,
As soft as the winds above,
"Hush, little man, there's not another
Thing as good as Love!"

SONG

A hurry of wings past the sunset's gold,
A flurry of cloud-ships touched with fire!
And my heart goes out all glad and bold,
Swift on the wings of an old desire.

A flutter of wings as they sink to rest
In the nesting place where the young have grown,
And my mad heart still toward the darkening West
Goes through the silence alone, alone.

A whisper of winds where the waters roam
With an undersong in the hush and dew!
And my mad heart far on its flight from home
Suddenly calls, like a child, for you.

OF DREAMS

I.

THE DREAMS OF ONE DEAD

What has become of all the glorious dreams
That once thrilled in this heart now ever still?
Have they gone with the dead unto the hill
Or gone with the free soul some place where gleams
The trace of star-dust washed by astral streams
On bars of Light beyond the mortal will,
Beyond our vision in the years until
Death works a change within the theme of themes?

If they have joined the earth upon the brow
Of the wise hill they may inspire the dust
To give new glory from the sunny sod.
If they have followed with the soul, and now
Find glory even beyond their hope and trust,
How they must long to tell us more of God!

II.

THE GLORY OF DREAMS

But if Death is the end of all in all,
And if there is no soul that flies at last
Beyond our wander-ways to places vast
Where constellations, not men, rise and fall,

Then these dreams, though bound in a region small,
Worried with doubts, and often overcast
With clouds blown from the chill waste of the Past,
Have glory enough for growing proud and tall.

Even as blooms and trees, even as grain,
They grew from out the dark into the light,
Bringing new worth unto the native sod.
They knew the beauty of the dancing rain,
They knew the whispers of the winds at night,
And, knowing these, they knew something of God.

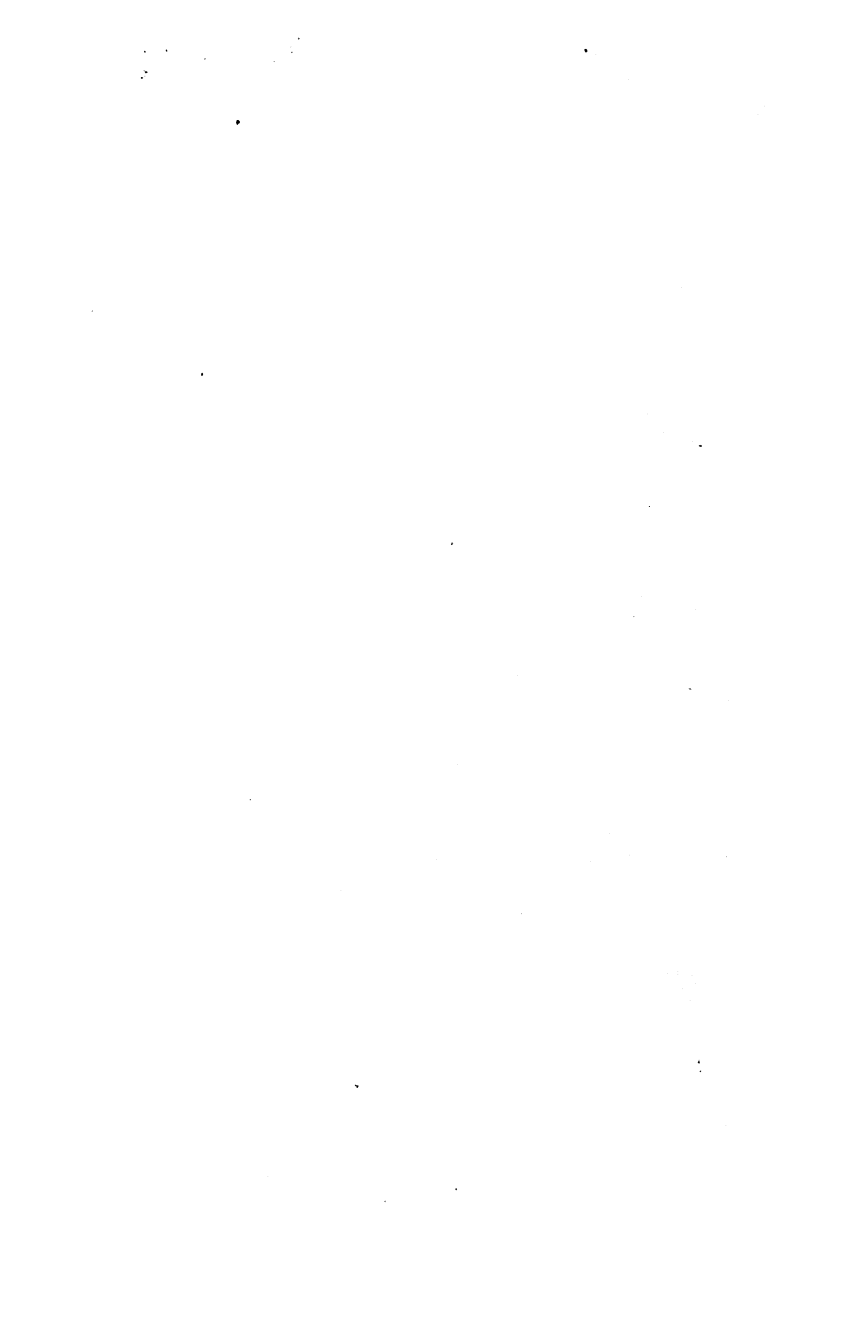
III.

THE IMMORTALITY OF DREAMS

Some hearts are as the sod and dreams like these
Are as the seed the dead stalk leaves the Earth.
Their kind will live, and thrilling with new birth,
Take an allotted place with stones and trees.
Nothing so true, for all Life's miseries,
For all its doubt, for its misguided mirth,
Will pass and leave with us a dreaded dearth
While the Unseen works magic where He sees.

Oh! is there not, then, Immortality
Even in such a simple life as this?
Is it not glorious? Is it not well
That Truth and Hope and Beauty still may be
For dreams long dreamed, long lived, although we miss
The Dreamer while he works his miracle?

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